

Teamwork in Healthcare: A Winning Strategy for Caregivers

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1 Contact Hour

Objectives:

- Describe the four elements of teamwork
- Explain how individuals with different strengths make an effective team.
- Identify qualities that contribute to being a good team member.
- Discuss how conflict within a team can strengthen positive teamwork.

What is a Team?

A team is a group of people with a variety of experience, skills, and talents working to help each other achieve a common goal.

Today's healthcare settings include workers from a variety of cultural backgrounds. Coworkers may have a different origin of language, religion or customs. These differences can pose a barrier to team development. Keeping communication open and expressing genuine interest in each other's points of view can assist in building a level of mutual understanding that supports professional teamwork.

Teamwork takes the dedication of every player contributing his or her skills and attributes. The uniqueness of individual team members forges a stronger team by combining individual strengths to overcome individual weakness. The main common goal should be directed toward providing the best care possible to the clients that are served.

When individuals work well together, everyone wins. Good teamwork creates a positive environment, fosters good relationships among coworkers, and lightens the load on all individuals. Most importantly, teamwork provides consistent, quality of care to clients.

Research has shown, employees who feel part of a strong team are happier and more productive.

Elements of Teamwork:

There are four essential T-E-A-M elements that combine to create an effective team.

Essential T-E-A-M elements include:

Trust
Empathy
The right **A**ttitude
Mutual respect

Trust: Allows team members to be honest about their strengths and weaknesses. Know they can rely on each other. Focus on getting the job done, and feel supported by their teammates. Trust is the glue that holds teams together. Without trust, individual team members spend time and energy trying to protect themselves or to outdo each other, reducing the team's effectiveness.

Empathy: Empathy is the ability to imagine yourself in another person's situation. It means being aware of, and appreciating, another person's experiences and feelings. Healthcare workers are experts on empathy. They display empathy while caring for a client. Extending this level of consideration to coworkers helps strengthen the bond between workers and at the same time strengthens the team.

Attitude: Attitude is a manner, disposition, feeling or position with regards to a person or thing. A team will function better if all team members leave their personal problems at the door when they arrive to work, expect the best from each other, recognize and resolve small conflicts before they grow into larger ones, and attempt to feel cheerful even when feeling down.

Mutual Respect: Respect means recognizing and attempting to uphold the rights and dignity of another person. It also means accepting each others view and the right to have them. Celebrating each others success, sharing disappointments and working toward a solution together are ways individuals interact with each other within successful teams.

Not all individuals will agree with, or even "like" all members of the caregiving team. Treating everyone with courtesy and respect is crucial, and will go a long way toward building a team that can work together.

Things to Remember:

- Every team member has strengths and weaknesses.
- Team members contribute their unique talents and strengths.
- A teams combined strengths can make up for individual weakness.
- Each team member is responsible for helping to create an effective team.

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Post Test

1. List and define the four elements of teamwork.

a.

b.

c.

d.

2. What would you do if a coworker asks for your help?

3. Individual weakness always ruin even the best teams.

True or False

4. List three qualities that contribute to a good team player.

a.

b.

c.

5. How can conflict within a team strengthen teamwork?

6. Conflict among team members always has a bad outcome.

True or False

7. List four things to remember when strategizing teamwork.